

UN climate change summit succeeded in spotlighting urgency of action, says official

23 September 2009 – The United Nations climate change summit convened by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon succeeded in mobilizing political will ahead of a major conference later this year by focusing the attention of world leaders on the urgent need for action on global warming, a senior official said today.

Yesterday's summit was the largest-ever high-level gathering on the issue – attended by over 100 world leaders – and was part of Mr. Ban's efforts to mobilize momentum as governments work to 'seal the deal' on an ambitious new agreement to curb greenhouse gas emissions at the UN climate change conference to be held in December in Copenhagen, Denmark.

"I think it's safe to say we achieved our goals," Robert Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Planning, told a news conference. "The summit did, most certainly, mobilize significant political will at the highest level and it did focus heads of State and government on the urgency for action."

The summit also succeeded in accomplishing another major goal, he said, noting that "there was a serious and sustained dialogue between the most vulnerable and the major economies.

"It was very striking how much the leaders agreed that they need to agree and can agree in Copenhagen. This was an important recognition by all the leaders present that a deal was possible and that they are going to work very hard to achieve it."

In addition, a number of important announcements were made, including by Japan, which pledged to slash their emissions by 25 per cent by 2020, and Maldives, which said it intends to become climate-neutral by 2020.

"One of the biggest outcomes of the day was that financing finally took centre stage," added Mr. Orr, noting that financing is the *sine qua non* of getting a successful deal in Copenhagen.

He drew attention to a proposal put on the table yesterday for supporting a minimum of \$100 billion per annum over the next decade, which many leaders rallied around.

Janos Pasztor, Director of the Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team, noted that at the working dinner hosted by Mr. Ban last night, leaders expressed a very clear willingness to work together and to make sure that they break the deadlock of trust between them.

"They know that the trust that is not there is stopping them from agreeing on many of the core political issues that have been discussed now for some time.

"They also discussed that they are willing to do much more than what they have been willing to agree to do in the context of the negotiations. That is an optimistic sign that agreement will be possible in Copenhagen," he added.

In addition, the leaders said they were prepared to come together again before Copenhagen, depending on how negotiations go, with the Secretary-General stating that he is prepared to convene such a meeting, if desired.

In a related development, the UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**) today announced that a number of groups – from cities and railways to postal services, industry and civil society organizations – have pledged to significantly reduce their carbon footprint and promote greener living by joining the UN Climate Neutral Network.

“The growth of the climate neutral movement around the world is a clear sign that people from all walks of life are committed to solving the climate crisis and bringing about low-carbon economies and societies,” said UNEP Executive Director-General Achim Steiner.

“This groundswell of public support comes just weeks ahead of the crucial UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, where world leaders will have a unique opportunity to move our economies and societies onto a greener development path,” he added.

Launched in 2008, the UNEP-led Network has close to 100 participants worldwide, including several countries, cities, major international companies, UN agencies and leading non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Among the new groups joining forces with the Network are the University of California, Berkeley, and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) located in Bangkok, Thailand, as well as the Universal Postal Union, the International Union of Railways and Japan Airlines.

Also today, Mr. Ban paid **tribute** his Special Envoy on climate change and the former President of Botswana, Festus Mogae, on receiving the African Heritage Award.

“I am particularly grateful to President Mogae for his passionate efforts to mobilize international action on climate change, one of the leading global challenges of our times. As he has rightly said, ‘The stakes could not be higher.’”

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